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## Press Release

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### Kaiserslautern hosts Special Olympics

By Christine June  
USAG Kaiserslautern Public Affairs

**ENKENBACH-ALSENBORN, Germany** – There were a lot of firsts for Taylor McDaniels during the Special Olympics Spring Games 2007 held at the German Police Academy here May 2.

This was the first Special Olympics for the Patrick Henry Elementary fifth-grader, and she walked away with first place in her first event – the 50-meter unassisted race.

“I’m very happy to win because if you deserve something, you get a perfect certificate for that thing,” she said, referring to the ribbons given at each competitive event.

McDaniels was one of 646 athletes competing in seven competitive games such as soccer, badminton and volleyball. They were also able to enjoy 13 non-competitive games like treasure hunt or bowling.

Athletes, ages 5 to 70, represented 45 schools and institutions throughout Germany, including 17 Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe from eight military communities. All the participants received personal encouragement throughout the day.

“Right on – you were terrific (in the race),” said Emily Morris, 18, Hanau Middle and High School senior, who was volunteering as McDaniels’ buddy – an athlete’s personal coach, cheerleader and friend for the day.

Volunteering to help with the athletes’ day were nearly 2,000 German and American military and civilian members from surrounding areas.

Michael Nimitz, from the 21st Theater Support Command in Kaiserslautern, has been volunteering for this event for 13 years.

“I always make it a point to have this day free every year,” said Nimitz, who has volunteered as a buddy, translator, and game judge, and now for the past several years, as a co-coordinator for the soccer event. “It’s such a great event and so important for all the schools over here.”

Ribbons were given at the competitive events for just trying, with some athletes garnering first, second or third-place honors. By the games’ end, numerous multicolored ribbons adorned most athletes.

Adding to the color were medals of gold, silver and bronze awarded in the competitive games in gender-specific categories such as assisted, unassisted or wheelchair bound.

The Sarah Bican Inspirational Athlete Trophy was awarded to Ronny Kennel from Jakob-Muth-Schule in Kusel, for showing spirit and love of the games. This award is named after Sarah Bican, who as a DoDDS teacher brought Special Olympics to Kaiserslautern in 1974.

“Ronny was an inspiration to me because he always kept a smile on his face, and he always wanted to make sure everybody else was having fun as well,” said Tom Malehorn, of Ramstein Air Base, who was Kennel’s buddy.

Special Olympics is an international program of athletic competition for children and adults with special needs. It’s been held in the Kaiserslautern military community the first Wednesday in May for 24 years courtesy of the U.S. Army Garrison Kaiserslautern. For

the past eight years, the event has been held and co-hosted by the German Police Academy.

Athletes and volunteers from Hanau, Stuttgart, Bitburg, Heidelberg, Mannheim and Kaiserslautern military communities participated at this year's games.

## **CUTLINES:**

### **Torch.1**

Athlete Bryan Hogg, Kaiserslautern American High School ninth-grader, ignites the Olympic flame May 2 at the U.S. Army Garrison Kaiserslautern's Special Olympics Spring Games 2007. (Photo by Christine June)

### **Volleyball.1**

Anthony Smith, Mannheim High School junior, hits the ball over the net in the competitive game of Volleyball Toss and Hit during the May 2 U.S. Army Garrison Kaiserslautern's Special Olympics Spring Games 2007. (Photo by Christine June)

### **Congratulations.1**

Taylor McDaniels, 11, Heidelberg's Patrick Henry Elementary School fifth-grader, and her Buddy, Emily Morris, 18, Hanau Middle and High School senior, rejoice after hearing that she won the 50-meter unassisted race May 2 at the U.S. Army Garrison Kaiserslautern Special Olympics Spring Games 2007. (Photo by Christine June)